

VZCZCXRO9955
PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHSQ #0361/01 1551327
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 031327Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY SKOPJE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7399
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE 0331
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUESEN/SKOPJE BETA
RUEHSQ/USDAO SKOPJE MK
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000361

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/05/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: PM GRUEVSKI PLEDGES CLEAN ELECTION
RE-RUNS; CONTINUED PRESSURE NEEDED TO TURN PROMISES INTO
REALITY

REF: SKOPJE 359 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) In the wake of seriously flawed early parliamentary elections held June 1 (reftel), PM Gruevski told the Ambassador that he will not pursue coalition talks until free and fair re-runs are held at all polling stations where problems were noted. He said ongoing law enforcement actions would continue against perpetrators of the violent incidents and electoral irregularities observed during the June 1 balloting. He also agreed that police and local election board members at polling stations where re-runs are held will come from outside those municipalities. If Macedonia holds clean re-runs, the government may succeed in somewhat re-building eAlbanian confidence in institutions and in repairing the damage already done to the country's democratic institutions, and to its NATO and EU membership aspirations. End summary.

NO COALITION TALKS UNTIL CLEAN RE-RUNS ARE HELD

12. (C) The Ambassador met with PM Gruevski June 2, at his request, to discuss the aftermath of the seriously flawed June 1 parliamentary elections. Gruevski said he was unhappy about the incidents of intra-Albanian violence and electoral irregularities that had occurred in northwest Macedonia and in the vicinity of Skopje, which he acknowledged had mostly been caused by eAlbanian governing coalition partner DPA. The government would "do everything in its power" to ensure the results in polling stations where such irregularities had been noted were annulled to allow new voting in re-runs two weeks hence (June 15). In the meantime, he would not engage in coalition talks with other parties until free, fair, and clean re-runs were held.

RE-RUNS AT ALL PROBLEMATIC POLLING STATIONS

13. (C) Gruevski acknowledged the damage the violent incidents, intimidation, ballot stuffing, and other electoral irregularities had done to the country. He had spoken to opposition eAlbanian DUI leader Ahmeti the night of June 1, he said, to reassure him that he would encourage all state decision-making bodies to accept re-runs at all polling stations where such problems had been noted. He added that

he was going to meet with Ahmeti again to underscore his commitment to "100 percent free and fair voting" in those re-runs.

LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS AGAINST PERPETRATORS

14. (C) The Prime Minister noted that 28 individuals suspected of involvement in violent incidents or electoral fraud on June 1 already had been arrested and detained, and that police planned to arrest more suspects. Among those detained were notorious crime kingpin Agim Krasnigi and members of his gang (associated with DPA). Gruevski added that he had "resisted DPA pressure to free" Krasnigi, and pledged to prosecute the DPA activists who had illegally detained a U.S. congressional staffer at a polling station (reftel).

REVISING POLICE AND ELECTORAL BOARD PROCEDURES FOR RE-RUNS

15. (C) Gruevski insisted that, following a joint conversation with the Ambassador and DPA President Thaci the preceding week, he had ordered DPA-affiliated "Alpha" (plainclothes) police officers in Tetovo and other eAlbanian areas to be rotated out. It was possible, he ventured, that some of them returned "while off-duty" to the area (where they later took part in some incidents of voter intimidation and fraud). He said he would ensure uniformed police from outside the trouble spots were brought in to provide security during the re-runs, and agreed to the Ambassador's suggestion that Local Election Board members should come from outside of the

SKOPJE 00000361 002 OF 002

municipalities in which re-runs were held. Gruevski added that he would propose to the VMRO Executive Committee that senior VMRO leaders serve as observers during the re-runs.

ONE COUNTRY, ONE LAW FOR ALL

16. (C) The Ambassador told Gruevski that Macedonia was one country, and therefore one law had to apply for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity. Violations of one citizen's rights undermined the rights of all citizens. Noting that Embassy monitors had noted numerous instances of electoral fraud, intimidation and other irregularities, she said we concurred with ODIHR's preliminary assessment of the elections, issued the same day, describing them as falling short of meeting OSCE and Council of Europe commitments.

17. (C) The flawed outcome could be repaired, the Ambassador continued, if the government ensured free, fair and well-administered re-runs in all areas affected by violence and irregularities, not just in the handful of polling places officially closed by the State Electoral Commission on Election Day. The police had to enforce the law and ensure a safe and secure environment for all voters, observers, and election administration officials. The government had to do everything in its power to prevent a repeat of the June 1 incidents.

COMMENT

18. (C) Macedonia is at a crossroads in its democratic development -- if it succeeds in holding free and fair re-runs, and DUI accepts the outcome, there is a good chance that the damage already done to the country's NATO and EU candidacies can be repaired. If it fails to do so, the political repercussions will be swift and potentially destabilizing. DUI will feel that it has been cheated out of what it considers its legitimate place as the representative of the majority of eAlbanian voters. DUI members will question the party's commitment to Macedonia as a unitary state in that case, and federalization as an option may become an attractive option for many among the DUI rank and

file.

19. (C) Responsibility for the right outcome largely rests with Gruevski, who must make good on his words, ensure that there is considerable re-voting, and order his MOI to ensure that DPA leader Thaci's henchmen and law enforcement officers sympathetic to DPA are prevented from repeating the intimidation tactics they used during the electoral campaign and on Election Day. Whether Gruevski succeeds is largely a question of political will, not of capacity or the legal instruments needed to turn things around. Ongoing U.S. and other international pressure will be necessary to ensure that Gruevski fulfills his promises.
Milovanovic